

WANDERERS FIGHT BACK FOR POINT

Slough 1, Wycombe 1 (at Hayes) Report by STUART EARP

AFTER Saturday's distinctly poor performance against Walton, Wycombe Wanderers fought right back against local rivals Slough Town on Tuesday in their Rothmans Isthmian League "derby". Trailing 0-1 at half time, the Blues dominated the second half to such an extent that most people came away from Hayes' Church Road ground feeling they had deserved more than their one point.

The match was staged at Hayes as Slough's new stadium will not be finished until October. Wanderers had already beaten the host club convincingly there, and they seem to favour the Church Road ground. They certainly raised their game and considering they were without two regular first teamers, the result against a much improved Slough side was creditable.

The two regulars missing were skipper Alan Phillips and striker Steve Perrin. Phillips injured ankle ligaments on Saturday

while Perrin arrived too late at the ground. Tony Horseman therefore came into the front three while Graham Mackenzie was sub. The replacement for Phillips was young Paul Griffiths, who came in at right back with Keith Mead, captain for the night, reverting back to his best position of centre back.

Griffiths was certainly thrown in at the deep end. For his debut, he faced a Slough side full of confidence and containing one of the best ball players in the business—Geoff Anthony. Paul has played very little football this term and was given a severe testing by Mick Mahon of Wimbledon in a pre-season friendly. However, manager Brian Lee's faith in the youngster certainly paid off handsomely. Griffiths gave everything he had, lost out only once in the air and his tackling and long distribution was excellent.

Griffiths was not the only success of the night. Mick Holfield, the Blues' most consistent performer this season, had yet another fine game and

notched the equaliser while left back Gary Hand again excelled in defence and typified the fighting spirit of the team. Howard Kennedy also was a dominant force in midfield and sprayed some lovely passes around as well as winning more of the ball.

The front runners, strengthened by Horseman's return, should have made more of the chances created, especially in the second half. But Dylan Evans deserves special mention for some good football on the flanks. Evans is an enigma. At times he can be brilliant then the next moment he will make a basic mistake. On Tuesday, however, he played with real confidence and looked extremely skilful.

But what of Slough? They have certainly improved since they went down 1-0 at Loakes Park in the second match of the season. There has been several changes in their line up and they should lift themselves from the lower regions by the end of the term.

The Rebels' greatest asset is the speed upfront. Dave Kemp and Geoff Anthony are both players with pace and skill. Richard Wilks and Mick Chatterton, who played in friendlies for Wycombe early in the season, both had quiet games.

The first half was played at a rapid pace and the honours over the 45 minutes were just about even, Slough hitting their goal three minutes before the break.

Kemp, a small but lively centre forward, gave Maskell an anxious moment after 12 minutes when his cross-shot flew through the 'keeper's hands and bounced along the crossbar.

The Blues came back strongly after 15 minutes when Kennedy clipped a swerving shot just over the top. Then Spittle raced out of his area to boot the ball clear as Holfield raced in. Spittle's "wonder save" came in the 28th minute. Following a corner, Reardon crossed the ball into the box where Horseman nodded right into the path of Searle. Keith, ten yards out, let fly with full power as the ball bounced up. The drive seemed destined for the top corner until Spittle somehow got across and tipped it over the top.

After this spell of Wycombe pressure, Slough came back themselves. Chatterton once escaped Dave Bullock and crossed ed invitingly in the middle where Anthony was dangerously unmarked in the middle. Geoff had a free shot but slipped as he ran in and those vital few seconds allowed Wycombe to re-group their defence and foil the move.

Then, with 42 minutes gone, Slough raced into the lead. After pressure on their own goal area they suddenly broke away when John Beyer thumped a high an hopeful ball upfield. Kemp had a yard start on the centre backs and certainly made the most of it. Mead, who has been playing with a minor leg injury for a couple of weeks, had no hope of catching the centre forward as he ran right down the middle and crashed a glorious drive past Maskell's left hand.

It took Wanderers just eight minutes of the new half to get back on level terms. After Searle had nodded a Holfield cross over the top, Wanderers won a corner on the left. Horseman took this one instead of Kennedy and curled the ball into the six yard box. Holfield arrived from nowhere to head the ball firmly home. Sixty seconds later Mick tried to make it 2-1 with a well placed chip, but Spittle gathered well.

From then on it was very much one way traffic. Sound defensive work, with Hand and Griffiths outstanding, kept the Rebels on the rack as Wanderers began to combine well.

Slough, content it seemed, with a point at this stage, brought on Tim Smith for the out-of-touch Wilks to bolster midfield but Wycombe continued to dictate events.

Although Wycombe had virtually all the play, Slough's defence were holding out well. Often Cannon or Turl cleared dangerous crosses at the last moment to deny the Blues a clear cut scoring chance.

Tony Horseman, however, seemed to have a great opportunity in the 75th minute when Holfield's cross left him with a yard to move. He controlled well and was about to shoot when he appeared to be held back by Beyer. There were loud appeals for a penalty from both players and spectators, but

referee Knock, right on the spot, decided otherwise. Reardon, incensed with the decision ran up to the referee and collided with him. His protests could easily have cost his club at least one penalty point, if not four.

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell; P. Griffiths; K. Mead, D. Bullock, G. Hand; H. Kennedy, T. Reardon, M. Holfield; D. Evans, A. Horseman, K. Searle. Sub. G. Mackenzie (not used).

SLOUGH: P. Spittle; T. Turl, J. Beyer, M. Cannon, B. Underwood; B. O'Sullivan, T. Williams; G. Anthony, M. Chatterton, D. Kemp, R. Wilks (sub. T. Smith 69 mins.).

Referee: P. Knock (Oxford).
Half time: 1-0. **Goalscorers:** Wycombe — Holfield (52)
Slough—Kemp (42).